



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES  
**LISBON • PORTUGAL**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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**MESSAGE FROM CHARGE D'AFFAIRES JOHN OLSON**

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Happy Thanksgiving!

As many of you might know already, Thanksgiving is one of the most important and emblematic holidays on the American calendar. It is a time for people to be with their families, to give thanks for what they have, and also a time for charity.



In this newsletter edition, in addition to highlighting what Thanksgiving means to Americans, we are also taking the opportunity to welcome the landmark international agreement to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons arsenal. Syria's chemical disarmament will bring us closer to ensuring the world never again has to witness the brutality and horrendous spectacle of a chemical weapons attack. We have had a number of very interesting speakers in the past month, starting with veteran journalist and expert on American diplomacy, Nicholas Kralev. As part of a European tour, Mr. Kralev talked with students, academics, U.S. and Portuguese diplomats about the challenges facing American diplomacy and his experiences traveling around the world with several Secretaries of State. In October, Muslim-American comedian and storyteller Aman Ali entertained audiences throughout the country, from Faro to Braga, with his tales of what it means to be a Muslim in America, as well as his stories of his travels across the country during his '30 Mosques in 30 Days' project. And finally, we recently welcomed the visit of U.S. Trade Representative Senior Negotiator Elena Bryan to the country for a talk in Lisbon on the benefits for Portugal of the EU-U.S. Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) currently being negotiated.

With our Fulbright partners, the Embassy is excited to launch this month, a series of professional development workshops across the country for the alumni of USG-funded exchange programs. We also welcome you to visit several of the exhibitions that are both ongoing and upcoming, and if you are a parent in Aveiro of a 9th or 10th grader, we hope your school will be sending a team to compete in our first regional Spelling Bee in Aveiro.

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## THE INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO ELIMINATE SYRIA'S CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAM

Since the August 21 chemical weapons attack in Syria, the international community has made significant strides in eliminating Syria's chemical weapons program. Just a few months ago, Syria had one of the world's largest chemical weapons stockpiles. As of October 31, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) – on which both Portugal and the United States serve as Executive Council members -- is now confident that no additional chemical agents or munitions can be produced in Syria. The international community has stepped up given the magnitude of the task, and the OPCW is to be applauded for its central role in the ongoing effort. Brave and dedicated OPCW and UN personnel have taken great personal risks to get the job done.

The United States has contributed \$6 million to the effort, including direct financial assistance to the UN and OPCW trust funds set up to support this project, as well as training, equipment, protective gear, logistical support, and medication for the inspection team. While what has been accomplished so far is a significant step, more needs to be done to ensure the final phase of elimination. In the end, Syria will be held accountable for the safe and swift elimination of its chemical weapons program and for full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 2118, OPCW Executive Council decisions, and the Chemical Weapons Convention. We need to maintain our momentum and, in so doing, ensure that these deadly weapons are never used again against the Syrian people or against any other citizens in the region or beyond.



President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry

## THANKSGIVING

In the autumn of 1621, almost one year after the English Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock in what is now Massachusetts, they gathered with members of the Wampanoag tribe of Native Americans for a feast celebrating the colonists' first successful harvest. A blend of Native American and English Puritan customs, the celebration combined eating with expressions of gratitude and friendship. Historians believe the two groups dined on foods native to North America such as turkey, duck, venison, lobster, crab, berries, pumpkin and squash. Although the modern American Thanksgiving menu differs slightly from the original fare, the holiday's essence remains the same: giving thanks for what you have, and sharing with others.

[Learn more about Thanksgiving](#)



A volunteer delivers a tray of Thanksgiving dinners to guests at a California rescue mission

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE EMBASSY

SPEAKER: AMAN ALI

US Embassy Lisbon welcomed Muslim-American comedian and story-teller Aman Ali, on a whirlwind speaking tour of Portugal. Starting in Evora, then working down to the University of the Algarve, back up to Lisbon, and then all the way up to Porto and Braga, Mr. Ali covered a lot of ground. One of the center-pieces to Mr. Ali's visit to Portugal was his talk on his 2011 project, "30 Mosques in 30 Days," in which he and a friend spent the month of Ramadan (Islamic holy month of fasting) driving across the United States and visiting a new mosque every day. A natural storyteller, Ali captivated his audiences with tales of car malfunctions in Montana, small towns in North Dakota, and being asked to be the best-man in a wedding at 1:30 in the morning in New Mexico.

"I'm not trying to tell a positive story about Muslims in America – I am trying to tell a truthful story," he said. Mr. Ali's stories from the road shed new light on parts of America that are not always visible to the rest of the world. Through his sense of humor and honest candor, Ali was able to make these stories both accessible, and also relatable. "I don't have a separate Muslim life, or a separate American life; It's just my life!" he said at the end of one of his presentations at the University of Lisbon. Aman Ali left a lasting impression on those who heard him speak. The US Embassy Lisbon would like to extend a big thank-you to the universities, schools and cultural institutions that helped make this event possible! Mr. Ali had the pleasure of presenting at the University of Évora, the University of the Algarve, NOVA University, Palmela International School, University of Lisbon Faculty of Letters, and the University of Porto Faculty of Letters.

[Learn more about the program](#)



Aman Ali addressing the audience

## NICHOLAS KRALEV AND "AMERICA'S OTHER ARMY"

U.S. Embassy Lisbon had the honor of hosting author, journalist, and diplomacy expert Nicholas Kravlev earlier this month. Mr. Kravlev spoke with both Portuguese diplomats and American Foreign Service Officers about the future of American diplomacy. His recently published book, "America's Other Army," provided the framework for this discussion. Mr. Kravlev has had unparalleled access to the inner-workings of American diplomacy, having accompanied former Secretaries of State, Hillary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell and Madeline Albright as a journalist. While in Portugal, Mr. Kravlev also spoke with students and faculty at ISCTE and met with members of Parliament and officials from the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[Learn more about the visit](#)



Nicholas Kravlev

## U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE ELENA BRYAN VISITS PORTUGAL

On November 8, Senior Negotiator for the U.S. Trade Representative's Office, Elena Bryan, visited Lisbon to participate in a conference on transatlantic trade issues and Luso-American perspectives. The conference was largely organized by Member of European Parliament Vital Moreira and featured panelists from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, labor unions, the Portuguese business community, and other interested stakeholders. Ms. Bryan participated as one of the keynote speakers at the opening session alongside Rui Machete, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Government, and Jean-Luc Demarty, Director-General for Trade of the European Commission. The conference focused on discussing the impact the Trade and Investment Agreement would have on Portuguese-American economic relations, and included a debate by stakeholders.



Elena Bryan

## ALUMNI WORKSHOPS

### Calling all alumni!

Starting November 30, the U. S. Embassy in Lisbon in partnership with Fulbright Portugal, the American Corners in Portugal and other partners, will present several professional development workshops throughout Portugal designed exclusively for alumni of USG exchange programs. Over a year in the planning, Portugal was awarded a small grant from Washington to finance this effort.

The full-day planned workshops include: interpersonal communication; leadership and coaching; team dynamics, team building & team management; conflict resolution and negotiation. This series will eventually be followed up by a workshop on grant writing, coming ahead of the annual Alumni Innovation Engagement Fund competition. We hope you can join us:

- **November 30- Interpersonal Communication**  
American Corner, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa
- **December 07 - Interpersonal Communication**  
American Corner, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Porto
- **December 14 - Team Building, Dynamics & Management**  
American Corner, Universidade de Aveiro
- **January 11 - Conflict Resolution and Negotiation**  
Universidade de Coimbra
- **February 22 - Leadership and Coaching**  
American Corner, Instituto Superior Técnico (Lisboa)

In addition to organizing what we hope will be fun ways for alumni to connect, learn and grow together, we hope that these workshops will be transformational, both in your professional and in your personal lives. Should you be interested in participating in one or more of these workshops, please respond to this address: [alumniportugal@state.gov](mailto:alumniportugal@state.gov) to receive a registration packet. Space at the workshops is limited, so please let us know of your interest early. In order to support the participation of alumni from different regions in the workshops, we have a limited number of travel grants available, which will be awarded based on financial need on a first come, first serve basis.



## UPCOMING EVENTS/IMPORTANT DATES

- **Thanksgiving – November 28**  
(U.S. Embassy is closed)
- **Alumni Workshop - November 30@0930**  
American Corner, University of Lisbon, FLUL
- **Aveiro Regional Spelling Bee - December 13, 2013 @0930**  
American Corner, University of Aveiro  
For more info, contact [davidsonCA@state.gov](mailto:davidsonCA@state.gov)
- **Alumni Workshop - December 14@0930**  
American Corner, University of Aveiro
- **American Glass Art exhibition - December 16-31**  
American Corner FCT (Library), NOVA University
- **Meals in Space exhibition - Through December 22**  
Lisbon Portela Airport, in the departures area